97-84034-7

Alexander, Charles Beatty

Elmira College

New York

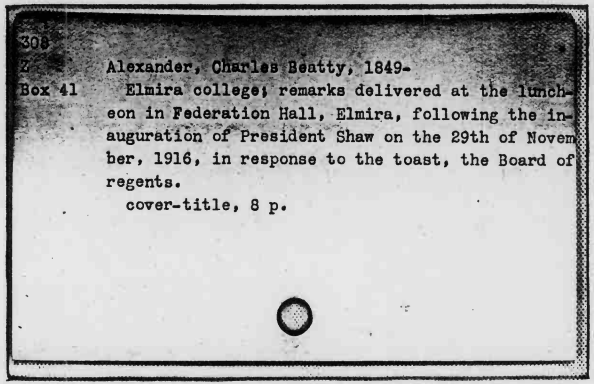
[1916]

97-84034-7
MASTER NEGATIVE #

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
PRESERVATION DIVISION

BIBLIOGRAPHIC MICROFORM TARGET

ORIGINAL MATERIAL AS FILMED - EXISTING BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD


308
Z
Box 41
Alexander, Charles Beatty, 1849-
Elmira college; remarks delivered at the luncheon in Federation Hall, Elmira, following the inauguration of President Shaw on the 29th of November, 1916, in response to the toast, the Board of regents.
cover-title, 8 p.

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: *Reproductions may not be made without permission from Columbia University Libraries.*

TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35mm REDUCTION RATIO: 11:1 IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB

DATE FILMED: 3-3-97 INITIALS: MS

TRACKING # : 20864

FILMED BY PRESERVATION RESOURCES, BETHLEHEM, PA.

JAN 16 1917
Gift of the President

308
Z
Box 41

ELMIRA COLLEGE

Remarks Delivered at the Luncheon in Federation Hall, Elmira, Following the Inauguration of President Shaw on the 29th of November, 1916, in Response to the Toast, The Board of Regents

BY

CHARLES BEATTY ALEXANDER, LL.D., Litt.D.
a Regent of the University of the State of New York

The statement has been made in the public journals that there is a shock hospital in London (presided over by a Johns Hopkins nurse), the object of which is to cure men of fear, which is now regarded as a form of nerve shock. It seems to me that one might well be opened in this country, to which those, including myself, who never get over their alarm at the presence of an audience, might resort before being called on to make an address.

It does not seem exactly fitting that I should respond to the sentiment, "The Regents", in the presence of my venerable associates, to whom, in point of service of some of them, I am but as a child. I take it, however, that I am asked to make these remarks as a compliment to my relatives, the Fassetts, who have done so much for Elmira College. In fact, President Shaw intimated this to me in a recent letter.

I remember at the genial lunch last spring of the Alumnæ of this institution in New York, I suggested that a troupe, or combination, should be formed consisting of Truman Fassett, who sang so beautifully on that occasion, and his lovely wife, who accompanied him, Dr. Shaw and myself, and that we should travel around a circuit singing and speaking the praises of Elmira. Perhaps this suggestion has led to the present result.

In the remarks which I made at that banquet, I said all the things which are now in my heart to say of the delight of the Regents in the prosperity of this lusty child of theirs, Elmira College, and in their satisfaction with the fair prospect before this great institution under the leadership of a distinguished scholar, divine and educator. And I will not repeat my utterances on that occasion.

I venture now to make a few observations on the subject of the education of women.

I had not expected that President Finley and his fellow conspirators of the Inauguration ceremonies this

morning would cover so much of the field of education, but in spite of that I propose to say what I had intended to say, although as one of the speakers intends to take a late afternoon train I will not undertake to tell you all that the Regents know about education. I trust that I may say nothing which will not be in accord with what was said today. The Reverend President Thomas S. Hastings, being asked by a young clergyman whether a certain beautiful devotional familiar hymn would "dove-tail in" with his sermon, said it would be a very poor sermon if it did not dove-tail.

In the first half of the Nineteenth Century, there was little improvement in the education and status of women. The following passage from Milton was still quoted by women with approval:

> To whom thus Eve with perfect beauty adorn'd:
> "My author and disposer, what thou bidst
> Unargued I obey; so God ordains;
> God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more
> Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise".

I wonder whether there are any husbands here whose wives would so address them!

I need hardly describe the radical changes which a century has effected in what used, I believe, to be called "female education". Formerly, those of that sex who went to school at all, went to a "girls' school", where they were trained in maidenly deportment, where they learned arithmetic enough to verify a grocer's or butcher's bill; possibly, though not invariably, enough to balance a check book. They had music lessons enough to make their male relatives dislike the piano. When they were not inflicting capital punishment on Beethoven's easier sonatas or Mendelssohn's "Songs Without Words"—other than the words of those who had to hear them, they might be committing to memory some of Mrs. Heman's masterpieces or

bits of Tupper's profound philosophy. One author said she must understand in the beginning "that there is an inequality in the sexes, and that for the economy of the world the men, who were to be the guardians and law-givers, had not only the greater share of bodily strength bestowed on them, but those also of reason and resolution". Some of them might even have a command of the first chapter of Butler's Analogy, sufficient to make them wonder what it was all about. The more advanced pupils frightened the young men of their acquaintance, if they had happened to read Cornelius Nepos or the first book of the Æneid. German and Italian were looked upon as the average girl graduate of the present now looks upon Sanskrit, or Assyrian inscriptions; and while they might have stumbled through a book of *Telemaque*, they could hardly order dinner in French. They wrote a beautifully timid sort of a hand with much careful shading of letters, and with a very fine pen. And the more clever ones, even if they got no diploma, left school carrying away as prizes a gilt-edged edition of Jane Austen's novels and a copy of Aurora Leigh and their teacher's autograph.

But at length there came a demand that women should have the opportunity of being as highly educated as men. Not only were they admitted to certain universities on the same conditions as the men, but colleges like this were founded for women, and their students and graduates became formidable competitors in the struggle for scholastic distinction. This country may proudly claim to have been the first to encourage this extension of learning, and Elmira College has always been on the firing line. There can be no question but that the standard in some of these institutions is as high as it is in the most exacting of our universities for men. Professors for the latter are frequently chosen from the faculties of women's colleges,

and men and women educated at the great universities have chairs at women's colleges.

The last report by the Bureau of Education at Washington shows 86 colleges for women with an attendance of over 24,000 students for the year of the report, and the amount of money invested in these colleges, aside from New York, was over $50,000,000. The record of this State in respect to the education of women is illustrious. The attendance for the year ending July, 1916, at our New York colleges for women was over 4,000, and the amount invested in property over $15,000,000.

It would be strange, indeed, if this widespread educational movement had not a profound effect upon the society by which we are surrounded, and upon the ideals of the women who get this kind of training. We hear much in these days about group thinking versus independent thinking. We recognize the power of a college to make women who will work out their opinions for themselves and then will unite with others of like mind. Perhaps some of the earlier graduates of these institutions felt themselves to be *rara aves,* and their unusual attainments made them inclined to "pose". Perhaps some of them were as conscious of the gown as if it were a first ball dress; and were as vain of the mortar-board as if it had been an Easter bonnet. But that day of beginnings is past.

I ask you to consider what it means to a nation to have every year this influx of new life, this addition to its citizenship of so many young women trained by the most modern educational methods, having been in contact with the intellectual aristocracy of the country. While many marry, many remain single; but both married and single they are to be found on college faculties, they are contributing to our national store of knowledge, they are taking responsible places as teachers,

editors, librarians—lights not hid under a bushel, but imparting a brightness and charm to our intellectual and social life. I should add that the physical culture incidental to this academic development of women is likely to have an important effect on the racial welfare of those countries where such development is encouraged. Especially here in America where the great army of men engaged in fierce business competition are in danger of physical deterioration owing to anxiety and worry, involving sometimes sacrifice of health, and occasionally nervous ruin, it is a fact full of promise that our women are becoming more vigorous. Their increasing knowledge carries with it prudence and force of character, both important elements in moral health; and these are intensified by an improvement in physical strength.

What is the final cause of these strenuous efforts on the part of women to get knowledge and to widen the intellectual horizon? At present, few have a professional career in view, and few devote themselves after graduation to natural science. The experience of Germany on this point was interesting though limited. Since 1908, the German universities have been open to both sexes. There were at the beginning of the war more than 3,000 women students at these universities, that is about five per cent. of the whole number. The majority of these women did not intend to go into the learned professions, although there were many prospective teachers among them. History, philosophy and economics were preferred to the natural sciences. Few native German women adopted law or medicine; still fewer theology. The tendency among them was to follow the "humanities" either for their own sake or as a preparation for special work. Until the legal and political status of women in that country is altered, the tendency towards literary studies is likely still further to increase.

In France, the authorities have been reluctant to give the bachelor's degree to women; but the women are demanding a diploma equal in value to that conferred upon the men. Some French writers contend that the attainment of the baccalaureate encourages women to enter the learned professions which are already overcrowded and thus, abdicating to some extent their own sex, they enter into unequal competition with men and encounter discouragement and failure. To obviate this difficulty without impairing the dignity of the degree, M. Chabot has proposed a special curriculum for women that they may be fitted for duties appropriate to their sex. Without giving his programme in full, I may say that he would introduce three general advanced courses for women: 1, an æsthetic course, including the study of native and foreign literature, Latin literature, the history of art, singing, diction, and manual training; 2, a practical scientific course, including applied hygiene, principles of household economy and housekeeping, and elementary medicine; 3, a moral and social course, including the elements of ethics, hygiene and psychology of the child, and principles of education. In short, he would make the baccalaureate the goal of a practical curriculum.

It has also been proposed to extend the social education of women at all the French lycées and universities, thus offering a great variety of subjects. This we heard this morning was what Elmira College proposed in a measure to do in the early fifties, far ahead of her day. Courses would, it is maintained, prepare women for many congenial occupations, and thus society would be improved and elevated. Students should learn all about vagabonds, invalids, children, and how to care for them in colonies and schools; they should become familiar with the conditions of labor in bakeries, laundries and factories; they

should investigate those who are out of work, labor performed at home, starvation wages, and legislative remedies for these evils. They should make a scientific study of alcoholism, the laws relating to it, the methods of reform, the psychology of the intemperate, the inspection of lodging houses, water supply, cleanliness as affected by poverty. They should give attention to the newer conceptions of commerce and industry, to the principles of fraternity and co-operation, to women's suffrage, pacificism, and altruistic education, to popular concerts and theatres. In short, they should become experts in all the complex machinery of modern society.

All this looks very promising and practical on paper, but even if women who wish a degree were generally to prefer such elective courses, it is doubtful whether they would be justified in doing so. Aside from the cost of such an education, they would at graduation find themselves in a position which from an economic point of view would be precarious.

Not long ago, at three of the Paris theatres, three plays were presented, each of which dealt with a particular phase of the "woman-question". One of these was "La Femme Seule" by Brieux; another was "Les Eclaireuses" by Donnay; the third was a French adaptation of Bernard Shaw's "You Never Can Tell". The first of these plays raises the problem which confronts a woman who is left isolated in society, dependent on her own resources, and exposed to masculine rivalry, tyranny and brutality. In the second, Donnay presents the question: what would become of love in a society of feminists? Brieux would have us believe that feminism is doomed to failure. Donnay gives simply a caricature of the serious "advanced" woman. Bernard Shaw leaves the question open. While ridiculing the old method of education in his portrayal of a father trained according to reactionary

principles, he puts into lively antithesis the children imbued with radical ideas, ultra-modern, positive, unrestrained and unguarded.

It seems to me that we are all in danger of sometimes caricaturing or exaggerating the feminist idea. We look with trepidation towards the future, and think we discern mobs of excited women disturbing the primaries, or "button-holing" voters of both sexes as near the polling places as the police permit them to come. There is, however, a moderate view to be taken, and fortunately we are not shut up to a choice between two alternatives—the idle solitude of the seraglio, and the insane sedition of the militant suffragette. Dr. Putnam, associate in History at Barnard, defined in a recent address feminism as follows: "Granting that the human race as a whole could be a great deal better off in several specific ways, the plight of women is susceptible of improvement in even more ways than the plight of man".

This discussion has taken me far afield from the subject of the toast—"The Regents". I wonder whether I am expected to say anything about them! One of the greatest Regents of the past was Simeon De Witt, who was a Regent from 1798 to 1834, and during that period filled the offices, first of Vice Chancellor, 1817 to 1829, then of Chancellor, 1829 to 1834. Washington wrote of him to Jefferson from Mount Vernon on March 3rd, 1784: "I can assure you he is extremely modest, sensible, sober, discreet and deserving of favors". These words might well apply to the great Chancellor Sexton of the present day, and I trust to each of my colleagues. I do not know what General Washington meant by "favors", but I feel sure all of us are open to receive them. One of them is the invitation to be here to-day, for which we thank our generous hosts.

The Evening Post Job Printing Office, Inc.,
156 Fulton St., N. Y.
8548X

MSH # 20864

END OF
TITLE